

By Bill Lambrecht, St. Louis Post-Dispatch
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WASHINGTON - Chancellor Angela Merkel's rare appearance this morning in front of a Joint Session of Congress might resonate more locally than in many cities because of St. Louis's strong German heritage.

In a speech this morning, she vowed that Germany would be a "strong and dependable partner for America" and spoke eloquently of "the second wall that needs to fall," the walls in people's minds and "the walls between the present and the future."

She received a lengthy and warm ovation from Democrats and Republicans alike, a rare expression of bipartisanship in the decidedly polarized Congress of today.

Ties to Germany will be on display again next spring when St. Louis hosts the annual meeting of the German Study Group, in which members of Congress and their counterparts from the German Bundestag (lower branch of parliament) gather to discuss issues of global concern and cooperation.

As chairman in Washington of the Congressional Study Group on Germany, Rep. Russ Carnahan, D-St. Louis, who helped escort Merkel in the House chamber for her speech this morning, will be deeply involved in the Congress-Bundestag seminar.

Carnahan's office noted today the economic alliance between Missouri and Germany, citing statistics showing that Germany is one of the several biggest investors in Missouri, with German firms investing more than \$1 billion in Missouri during a recent four-year period.

In addition, Germany ranks sixth among countries purchasing Missouri-made products, Carnahan's office said.

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